**Remarks by the NASA Administrator at the NASA Explorer School Launching Event** **06.30.03**

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Thank you very much Alexandra for that wonderful introduction. Good morning to you Norbert as well.

I can tell from your enthusiasm, Alexandra, that you will make a terrific explorer when you grow up.

Indeed, NASA's goal is to ensure that there are plenty of students like Alexandra who receive every possible opportunity to learn about the wonders of science and math, and engage in never ending exploration and discovery adventures.

Today we are going to take a big step forward in advancing this goal. This final day in June we are launching in Seattle, the city known for its famous Space Needle that points to the stars, the NASA Explorer Schools Program.

Through this innovative program, we're inviting teams of teachers and administrators, on behalf of their fifth to eighth grade level students, to embark on a unique three-year partnership with NASA. Many of our Nation's science and math educators, will essentially go "back to school" at NASA Centers in the summers, to acquire innovative teaching resources and technology tools using NASA's unique content, experts and other resources -- to make learning science, mathematics and technology more appealing to students.

This partnership will join educators, administrators, students, and families in sustained involvement with NASA's ambitious research, discoveries and missions.

There used to be a saying that the sky is the limit. Well in this Centennial of Flight Year, the sky and the heavens beyond are not a limit, but rather a vital venue for exploration, technological progress and educational excellence.

We're excited that Explorer School participants will be able to learn right along side NASA scientists as we gather data from the experiments being conducted onboard the International Space Station, explore the dynamics of Earth's climate and send our Mars Exploration Rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, to their rendezvous with the red planet early next year.

Furthermore, we're gratified that schools participating in the NASA Explorer School Program will represent every region of the country and will help motivate students, especially those from diverse communities, to pursue the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

For those of you who aren't aware, NASA's Explorer Schools Program, as well as our other major education initiatives, reflect NASA's longstanding commitment to advance educational achievement in America.

Indeed, last year in developing a statement of our core mission goals, we put front and center our work to promote math and science education as a means of helping to inspire and motivate the next generation of explorers.

We do this because NASA has important work ahead of us: As this second century of flight gets underway, our storied agency is working to pioneer the future on a daily basis as we improve aviation safety and efficiency, conduct important scientific research on the remarkable orbiting facility known as the International Space Station, probe more deeply into the mysteries of the

universe, and with devices like the Mars Exploration Rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, search for evidence that water once flowed freely on our neighboring planet.

When the young people we are attempting to reach through the NASA Explorer School Program become the scientists, mathematicians, engineers and astronauts of the future, they will help carry out that work, and much more.

So we believe we can't waste any opportunity that comes along to utilize NASA's hold on the imagination of the young and young at heart, to help prepare our youth to take on these exciting challenges.

We're certain that the NASA Explorer School program will provide us the opportunity to fire up thousands of young students and their parents about the possibility of engaging in scientific careers.

Now once it gets underway, the NASA Explorer School program will deservedly get a lot of attention. I'd also like you to know that we are working on a number of other fronts to help students like Alexandra experience the joys of learning about math and science.

Under the leadership of Associate Administrator for Education, Dr. Adena Williams Loston, we are recruiting a select group of K-12 level Educator Astronauts. In addition to performing regular flight duties on future Shuttle and Space Station missions, our Educator Astronauts will take their classrooms into space to directly engage millions of school children with space-based lessons about the wonders of science.

Dr. Loston is also guiding our efforts to produce technology-based teaching tools and strategies that are grounded in NASA's missions, to support professional development for teachers, and to provide opportunities for students and faculty to participate in NASA research.

All of these activities underscore our commitment not only to improve American educational achievement, but also to increase public interest in the fascinating subjects of science and math.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Dr. Adena Williams Loston who very much is the guiding force behind the NASA Explorer Schools Program and our other education initiatives. Dr. Loston the floor is yours.